

Proverbs 1:32

Wisdom's Warning

Proverbs 1:32 (NIV)

- "For the waywardness of the simple will kill them, and the complacency of fools will destroy them."

I. BACKGROUND

- A. Wisdom literature
- B. Authors: Solomon, Lemuel, Agur
- C. Literary form and meaning of proverbs
 - Proverb, oracle, discourse, parable, or taunt
- D. The meaning of *wisdom*
 - Ability to live life skillfully
 - Discern and follow a proper course of action

E. A little history on the wisdom of Solomon

- 1 Kings 3:5-14 "Wisdom given"
 - God asked Solomon what he wanted
 - Solomon asked for wisdom
 - God responded big-time
- 1 Kings 4:29-34 "Wisdom displayed"
 - Very great, vast wisdom
 - Exceeded that of all the wise men
 - The world came to listen to Solomon

II. The Context of Proverbs 1:32

- A. The book is wisdom from God, via Solomon.
- B. As a whole: The book of Proverbs is designed to impart God's wisdom in order to prevent and remedy ungodly lifestyles.
- C. Chapters 1-9 are designed to create a felt need for wisdom (thus, motivational).

II. Context, continued

- D. Proverbs 1:20-33
 - Wisdom is personified and speaking in 1:20-33
 - Both *Wisdom* and *Folly* are personified as women in Proverbs; the purpose is *contrast*.
 - Here, *Wisdom* appeals using reason and warnings.
 - Later, *Folly* entices using seduction, not reason.

II. Context, continued

- E. To whom is *Wisdom* speaking?
 - To those who have rejected her or ignored her.
 - It sounds like a last and final warning (done for emphasis).
 - Similarly, God sent Jesus as His final, last warning to mankind, who are being bad tenants, as in the parable of Matthew 21:33-44.

II. Context, continued

- F. Who is this person, *Wisdom* personified?
 - God's wisdom, present at creation, later given to Solomon more than all other men*
 - Now present in Christ, "in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Col. 2:3)
 - *Embodied and incarnated in Christ, "who became to us wisdom from God" (1 Cor. 1:30)
 - See Proverbs Chapter 8 for even more answers

II. Context, continued

- G. Verses 32-33 summarize *Wisdom's* entire speech (which began in v. 22).
 - Proverbs 1:20-33 is one Hebrew "proverb."
 - Proverbs 1:32-33 are a summary of the entire proverb.
 - Proverbs 1:20-31 is wonderful context for interpreting 1:32.

III. Four Key Words

- *meshuba'* (waywardness)
- *pethiy'* (simple)
- *shalwa'* (complacency)
- *kesil'* (fool)
 - For the *meshuba'* of the *pethiy'* will kill them, and the *shalwa'* of the *kesil'* will destroy them.

III. A. *meshuba'* (waywardness)

- Turning away, apostasy, backsliding
- The context here is not backsliding or apostasy *in doctrine*; instead, it is apostasy *in practice*, in how we live, reverting back to ungodly, unwise life practices.
- *Waywardness* is the refusal to listen to and respond to wisdom, as mentioned in verses 22-31.

III. A. *meshuba'* continued

- *meshuba'* (waywardness) is not teachable to Wisdom.
 - To be teachable, we must be, or become, reflective.
 - To be teachable, we must be, or become, humble.

III. B. *pethiy'* (simple)

- One who is open to the instruction of wisdom or folly, but inclined to folly, because no preference for the moral good has been formed.
- One lacking moral judgment and moral direction, therefore easily enticed, misled and turned back from the good and true.

III. B. *pethiy'* continued

- We must *discern* good from evil, but we must also *prefer* (value) good over evil. Important because preferences shape behavior more than discernment.
- Do not value *openness* to bad things; instead, *hide* from bad things. Be teachable to *Wisdom*; do not be teachable to *Folly*; instead, *hide* from *Folly*.

III. C. *shalwa'* (complacency)

- *False security* that comes from living an easy or comfortable life apart from God.
- It robs a person of motivation to change or repent.
- It deadens the feelings of need for God and His Wisdom.
- Irony of complacency: the real danger goes unrecognized.

III. D. *kesil'* (fool)

- Typically translated as “fool.”
- *kesil'* has a root meaning of “fat,” specifically one who is “fat” with self-satisfaction and thus feels no need for God.
- Because this is precisely the opposite of the biblical concept of wisdom, there is no one more unwise or stupid than the *kesil'*.

IV. Summary

A. Expanded Paraphrase

New International Version	Hebrew	Expanded Paraphrase
“For the waywardness	<i>meshuba'</i>	For the backsliding abandonment of God’s wise ways
of the simple	<i>pethiy'</i>	by those who are deliberately gullible, willingly seduced, easily misled and straying
will kill them;		will end up killing them;
and the complacency	<i>shalwa'</i>	and the easy life and false security
of fools	<i>kesil'</i>	of those who are “fat” with self-satisfaction and leave God out of the equation
will destroy them.”		will end up destroying them.

IV. Summary, continued

- B. Comparison of multiple translations:
 - “For the (sin/turning away/turning back/backsliding/waywardness/rejection of wisdom)
 - of the (simple/naïve/gullible/immature)
 - will kill them,
 - and the (prosperity/careless ease/complacency/smugness/indifference/lack of concern/trust in themselves/self satisfaction)
 - of (fools/stupid people)
 - will destroy them.”

IV. Summary, continued

■ C. Key actions to take

- Waywardness: reflect, be teachable, aim for Christ-likeness
- Simple: repent of failure to value godliness; accept prudence from God
- Complacency: don't fail to recognize true dangers; don't be content with waywardness
- Fools: don't fail to respond; repent and change when warned; turn to Christ

IV. Summary, continued

■ D. New Year's Resolutions:

- Prov. 1:32a is a call to a renewed pursuit of Christ-likeness and personal holiness. Avoid the "backsliding abandonment" done by the "deliberately gullible."
- Prov. 1:32b is a call to repentance from foolish complacency and self-satisfaction. Avoid the "false security" of the "self-satisfied."